DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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PORTIONS BEING WITHHELD AS INDICATED

(547)

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Action
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Info

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PP RUEHC
DE RUMJIR 26674 145 1050
ZNY CCCCC
P R 251045Z MAY 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
INFO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC FOR POLAD
STATE GRNC
BT
C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 26674

EXDIS

REF: SAIGON 26561 AND 26460 (NOTAL)

SUBJ: THIEU - KY

1. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH [redacted] WE HAVE OBTAINED FURTHER IMPRESSIONS REGARDING DIRECTORATE MEETING MAY 24 AND THE THIEU-KY RIVALRY.

2. [redacted] SAID HE THOUGHT GENERAL THIEU WOULD RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY BUT GUESSED THAT HE WOULD NOT MAKE A FINAL DECISION UNTIL CLOSER TO THE EARLY JULY DEADLINE FOR FILING. [redacted] SAID HE HAD CONFIDENCE THAT THE SITUATION COULD BE HELD TOGETHER IN THE MEANTIME AND SOME COMPROMISE SOLUTION WORKED OUT BY HIM AND HIS COLLEAGUES. HE CONFIRMED THAT REGIONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE MILITARY LEADERS WERE A FACTOR IN THE SITUATION, BUT RE-

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VERTED TO HIS STATEMENT ABOUT THE ROLE OF THE MILITARY IN THE ELECTION PROCESS AND SAID SUPPORT FOR A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE BY MILITARY PERSONNEL COULD ONLY BE ON A PERSONAL TB. [redacted] THOUGHT KY HAD A BETTER CHANCE FOR ELECTION THAN THIEU ALTHOUGH THIEU WOULD ATTRACT SOUTHERN SUPPORT. HE ALSO HAZARDED THE GUESS THAT GENERAL LE NGUYEN KHANG OF THIRD CORPS MIGHT BE SELECTED AS CHIEF OF JGS IF KY WERE ELECTED, SINCE THEY WERE OLD SCHOOLMATES. (GENERAL WESTMORELAND TOLD ME HE HAS SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THIS AS HE DOES NOT REGARD KHANH AS BEING ABLE ENOUGH FOR THIS KEY POSITION.)

3. [redacted] SAID THAT THE ATMOSPHERE BETWEEN THIEU AND KY AT THE DIRECTORATE MEETING SEEMED CORDIAL AND THERE WAS NO OUTWARD SIGN OF DIFFICULTY OR TENSION. ACCORDING TO BOTH HIM AND [redacted] THIEU RAN THE MEETING VERY WELL, EVEN STRESSING HIS AGREEMENT

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WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ON A NUMBER OF POINTS DURING THE DISCUSSION. NOTED THAT KY HIMSELF HAD PROPOSED THE DECISION TO RETURN TO THE EARLIER ELECTION DATES ANNOUNCED BY GENERAL THIEU ON APRIL 1. THIS GESTURE TENDS TO CONFIRM OUR IMPRESSION THAT THIS POINT, WHICH INVOLVES GEN THIEU'S PRESTIGE, WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A CONCESSION TO THIEU AND HIS SUPPORTERS. ADDED

THAT THE LETTER FROM THE DIRECTORATE TO THE ASSEMBLY WAS TO BE PHRASED IN TERMS OF "SUGGESTIONS" RATHER THAN "DEMANDS."

4. HAS, ACCORDING TO HIS OWN ACCOUNTS, BEEN ACTIVELY SEEKING TO MEDIATE THE SITUATION BETWEEN KY AND THIEU. HE HAS NOT YET SEEN THE LATTER BUT HAS DEALT THROUGH HIS BROTHER, NGUYEN VAN KIEN, AND EXPECTS TO SEE THIEU HIMSELF LATE MAY 25. SAID THAT AFTER TALKING TO A NUMBER OF ARVN PEOPLE IN RECENT DAYS, HE ALSO HAD THE IMPRESSION OF CONSIDERABLE UNEASE IN THE ARMY OVER THE SITUATION. HE SEEMED DOUBTFUL THAT AS A RESULT OF THESE RECENT EVENTS, THE ARVN WOULD BE WILLING TO LET THIEU COME BACK IN A HIGH POSITION SUCH AS CHIEF OF THE JGS.

5. IN THE CONVERSATIONS WITH MAY 23 AND 25 HE GAVE SOMEWHAT MORE SPECIFIC CONTENT TO THE REPORT THAT THE AGREEMENT ON FUTURE COOPERATION BETWEEN HUONG AND KY AMOUNTED TO AN UNDERSTANDING BY EACH TO APPOINT THE OTHER PRIME MINISTER IN THE EVENT OF VICTORY. ADDED THE INTERESTING RATIONALE THAT IF, FOR INSTANCE, ONE OF THESE TWO RECEIVED A WINNING VOTE OF 40 PERCENT AND THE OTHER 30 PERCENT THEN THE RESULTING GOVERNMENT BE CONSIDERED AS HAVING THE ENDORSEMENT OF 70 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. THOUGHT THAT HUONG AND KY WERE SINCERE

IN THEIR AGREEMENT BUT OBSERVED THAT EACH HAD HOT-HEADED ADVISERS CLOSE TO THEM WHO MIGHT SPOIL THE UNDERSTANDING EVENTUALLY.

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6. HAS INDICATED IN HIS VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS THAT HE HAS B
BEEN TALKING
EARNESTLY WITH KY ABOUT PROBLEMS SUCH AS CENSORSHIP AND OTHER REPRESSION RELATED TO PREPARATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS
ALSO CLAIMS TO HAVE HAD A STRONG AND FRANK TALK WITH GENERAL LOAN ABOUT SOME OF HIS ACTIVITIES. DIEM SAYS HE IS WORKING ON SOME KIND OF PLATFORM FOR KY WHICH MIGHT SERVE AS THE BASIS FOR PREPARING A "CONVENTION" IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO PULL TOGETHER SUPPORT FROM REGIONAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUPINGS. THE PLATFORM WOULD BE DISCUSSED AMONG VARIOUS SUPPORTERS OF KY, PARTICULARLY CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERS, BEFORE IT WOULD BE INTRODUCED AND ADOPTED. BUNKER
BT

NOTE: PASSED S/S-O, WHITE HOUSE, DOD, CIA, 5/25/67 9:36 AM

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